



SCOTT SHANLEY, GENERAL MANAGER

# Town of Manchester

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February 6, 2019

Mr. Justin Milardo  
DPH Drinking Water Section  
410 Capitol Avenue  
MS#12DWS  
Hartford, CT 06134

RE: Proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language

Dear Mr. Milardo:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language. The Town of Manchester Water Department supports the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) retaining primacy as it relates to the Safe Drinking Water Act. However, the position of the DPH to retain primacy through an assessment or a tax placed on water systems, which is passed along to our customers is not the ideal way to maintain it. The entire population of Connecticut reaps the benefits of primacy not just water customers.

Section 677(b) of Public Act 17-2 required DPH to develop a methodology for a safe drinking water primacy assessment in consultation with stakeholders and two meetings were scheduled. During these meetings numerous questions and ideas were brought forward and very few were addressed. The proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language also did not address the questions or ideas put forth in those meetings. Although DPH consulted with stakeholders on this matter, DPH used little in formulating this proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language.

The following is a list of concerns regarding the proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language:

1. The proposed fee could essentially double the present assessment fee. Although the cap increased the fee from \$4.00 to \$5.00 per customer our present assessment is \$2.57 per customer.
2. The proposal does not set a limit on the amount of the program funded by the assessment fees. Just the per customer cap.



3. The assessment fee is not equitable for all systems. Small community systems will pay \$150 per year while non-community non-transient community will pay \$150 per 3 years (or \$50 per year) and non-community systems seem to be exempt.
4. The assessment fee for community water system serving over 100 customers is based on a definition that is very hard for a water system to give an accurate number. A condominium complex or apartment complex with say six buildings (six services) would count as one customer. As defined it is possible to say a corporation which owns several apartment complexes at various locations within a water system be counted as one customer.
5. The proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language does not provide any language to have the DPH look at efficiencies that can be made and pass them along to the water customers.

In order to address the concerns raised to the proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language the following is recommended:

1. Set the proposed total fee at a percentage of the total cost of DPH Drinking Water Section to some number. The present fee amounts to 22 percent of the budget. A good number would be 25 percent of the previous year's budget maximum. This would allow expansion of staffing levels, changes to programs and increased wages and benefit costs without adjusting fees each time.
2. The need for a limit funded by the assessment would be incorporated into item one.
3. Charge an equitable fee for the small community systems and non-community non-transient community. Non-community non-transient community systems and community water systems serving less than 50 customers should pay \$150 per year. If you want to collect is as recommended, the fee should be \$450 per three years. This fee will be adjusted to reflect the increases or decreases based on Item 1.
4. Make the definition of customer to be service connections, excluding fire services. This would be much easier for utilities to calculate and every system would use the same numbers.

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5. Include language to have the DPH Drinking Water Section look at efficiencies each year when calculating the previous budget maximum. It needs to include an annual report an itemize staffing levels, including but not limited to number of each position within the Drinking Water Section, salary and benefits for each position, operational costs such as but not limited to, equipment and maintenance, office supplies and other items that form the Sections annual budget. Also any other fees paid by the DPH Drinking Water Section to the DPH for administration. This report will be the basis of calculating the following year assessment fee less any other fees taken in by the Section.
6. The language needs a sunset provision, every five to ten years. This will allow the DPH and stakeholders to reassess what has been set forth in the current language.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Safe Drinking Water Primacy Assessment Language. If you have any other questions please do not hesitate to contact me at 860-647-3115.

Sincerely:



Patrick Kearney

Administrator

Water and Sewer Department